

REPORT TO: STOBSWELL PARTNERSHIP BOARD - 1 OCTOBER 2008

FROM: PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

SUBJECT: STOBSWELL PROJECT ANNUAL REPORT 2007 - 2008

SUMMARY

Stobswell continues to improve. House prices have risen, the time it takes to sell property is now no different to other more popular areas, most dereliction is removed and environmental improvements are making an impact, new housing is making a difference and private investment in new housing is increasing. Some of the significant private landlords report increasing stability with longer tenancies and good tenants. New services started in the past couple of years are now established, appreciated and well used. Importantly these are all complimentary and support each other to the benefit of the community. There are fewer shops vacant and more facades have been improved. Undoubtedly the current financial situation is slowing down new, private house building and will also impact on house prices in an unpredictable way. The test of the strategy might well be how the neighbourhood weathers the storm over the next year.

Items on which progress has been disappointing are:

- a the back court improvements in Park Avenue where, despite eventually managing to get owners in agreement in closes, they have not progressed with any action on the ground. This is symptomatic of a continuing lack of maintenance in tenements. It is impossible to say if this has any relationship to the increasing buy to let position; and
- b the appearance of the shopping street remains a local issue.
- c commuter use of car parks and on street is an increasing problem.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Stobswell Partnership Board has been established for nearly 4 years. This report summarises progress with the Stobswell Regeneration Strategy and Development Framework over the year 2007/2008, and part of 2008
- 1.2 A key objective of the Dundee Partnership Community Planning Building Stronger Communities Group is "to demonstrate the long term viability of inner city communities by achieving a sustainable regeneration of Stobswell". The basic task is to restore Stobswell to its previous status as Dundee's third most popular inner suburb.
- 1.3 The outcomes expected are:
 - a a more stable neighbourhood with greater housing choice;
 - b greater neighbourhood satisfaction because there is a perception of a safe neighbourhood;

- c rising property values and reduced turnover in residents, showing the neighbourhood is somewhere that people want to live; and
- d improved physical environment with no derelict land or property, improved fabric of property and a reduction in litter and unmanaged refuse.

1.4 The Fundamentals of the Strategy and Development Framework

Spatial Framework and Environmental Investment Programme:

- a remove dereliction;
- b introduce new house building to improve housing choice and tenure choice;
- c improve the quality of the tenement environment and the maintenance of the tenements;
- d improve the shopping environment of Albert Street;
- e undertake environmental and streetscape improvement; and
- f the physical work is supported by Social and Economic Programmes and a marketing strategy.

Socio - Economic Programme:

- a promote community engagement;
- b sustain community facilities;
- c develop training and employment;
- d promote improved health;
- e promote youth projects;
- f promote better property management; and
- g market the neighbourhood.

2 **ACTION DURING 2007/2008**

Delivery Mechanism

- 2.1 The partnership **officers group** including staff from Communities Scotland, Tayside NHS Trust, Hillcrest and Home in Scotland Housing Associations, Dundee City Council (Planning and Transportation, Housing, Leisure and Communities, Economic Development and Environmental Health and Trading Standards), the Police and on a voluntary basis representatives from the Stobswell Forum and the Stobswell Landlord's Forum met every 2 months and this has now reduced to every 3 months. This enables co-ordination of funding and actions and keeps all partners updated with regard to issues. Communities Scotland has now become part of the Scottish Government and has fewer staff locally. A representative has managed to attend only one meeting since Feb 2007. The NHS representative is unable to attend because of pressure of work. In both instances they can be contacted if there is an issue. Meetings have usually included an update from each representative and discussion about any issue that has arisen.
- 2.2 **The Stobswell Forum**, the Community Representative Structure, meets monthly and has open forums every 3 months. This remains invaluable as a means of consulting

on proposals and keeping the community updated and as means of the community raising concerns. A key campaign of the Forum over the past year has been with regard to the staffing and opening of facilities at Baxter Park.

- 2.3 The key to delivering the strategy is **funding**. The local housing investment agreement between Dundee City Council and Communities Scotland continues to include Stobswell as a focus for housing association investment. **Communities Scotland** invested £??m of Housing Association Grant in Stobswell during 2007/2008. The **Environmental Budget** for Stobswell was £100,000. **Wider Action Grants** from Communities Scotland supported the Stobswell Advice and Information Centre, the expansion of its premise and the Active Communities service initiatives. This ceased at April 2008. Hillcrest Housing Association are temporarily providing funding. Communities Scotland, now the Scottish Govt Housing Investment Division, has no Environment Grant contribution in 2008/9 and this might also be the case in 2009/10
- 2.4 The **Vacant and Derelict Land Fund** has continued to be partly focussed on Stobswell with a total of £235,000 being spent here. Disposal of several sites previously dealt with via the VDLF have resulted in receipts of ££157,000 in 2007/2008 and used in Stobswell.
- 2.5 **ERDF** grant assistance of ££242,000 was received.
- 2.6 The **Community Regeneration Fund** is supporting 5 projects in Stobswell or that serve Stobswell.
- 2.7 **Average prices of flats** (at **June 2006**) enjoyed a substantial uplift in 2005 and over 2006 have kept pace with the Dundee average rise in values. While not reducing the gap substantially with comparator streets in the West End or Clepington Road values have at least kept pace with the increase. Time taken to sell flats remains the same in Stobswell as other popular neighbourhoods.
- 2.8 **The environment programme** undertook the reconfiguration and renewal of the Langlands St Car Park, thereby increasing the number of car parking spaces by 9, and enabling a pedestrian through route between Albert St and Dura St.
- 2.9 The Park Avenue and Baldovan Terrace streetscape projects were also completed, introducing street trees and eurobins. The Park Ave project has fenced privacy areas in front of flats. New white lighting has been mounted on building walls freeing up space on the footway. Some modest increase in parking has been achieved in Baldovan Terrace. Street trees were also introduced into Morgan St and Cardean St. The euro bins have proved beneficial. Misgivings by some residents have proved unfounded and the Environmental Health and Trading Standards Department have reported that it is now exceptional to receive a complaint about dumped rubbish in back courts in Park Avenue.
- 2.10 A small area of derelict land at Whalers Close was purchased following publication of a CPO to enable the next part of the work to increase parking and create a route through to Dura St from Albert St. The contract to create the through route and some more car parking is underway. The remaining derelict property here is proving difficult to resolve. It will probably not now be resolved until there is an upturn in the housing market to improve values. Meanwhile there is another temporary leisure use in the building, though this does nothing for the appearance.

- 2.11 At Dura Street/Erksine Street a Compulsory Purchase Order has been confirmed. The property now belongs to the Council and Home in Scotland is confirming a cleared site valuation via the District Valour prior to the Council proceeding with demolition. It will then be sold to Home in Scotland to develop 12 flats.
- 2.12 **Dereliction** is now largely eliminated or is close to resolution but derelict property at key locations of Whalers Close, Embank Street and a shop at 191 Princes Street. remain an issue.
- 2.13 All the street lighting in the study area has been converted to **white light**, some of it has been wall mounted on tenements thereby freeing space on the footway.
- 2.14 Since April 2007 the 39 **social rented housing** units at Victoria Street have been completed and occupied.
- 2.15 Since April 2007 **private housing** development has moved ahead significantly with 34 houses and 12 flats have been completed and occupied and many more under construction. It is understood a few of these have been let rather than owner occupied. This is likely to slow down with the current credit situation.
- 2.16 **Housing choice** is improving with six private housing developments, under construction. With the completion of five Social rented developments there has been a marginal change in tenure. This will probably remain the case until all the new housing for sale has been completed. As a proxy for the tenemental streets, Park Avenue and Baldovan Terrace have been examined. This has not changed significantly in the past 2 years, but might in the next year as a consequence of the credit situation.
- 2.17 The "**Tenement of the Future**" is still a long term ambition. The 2 tenements at mains Loan refurbished by Qdecco are now occupied. These were totally stripped back to the stonework and fitted out to current building regulation standards in terms of insulation. This is applied internally. The new flats also include "Paris balconies" and patio doors with the rooms re-orientated to enjoy the sunny SW aspect to obtain a degree of passive solar design. The agents have been asked if they can obtain fuel bills from occupiers over at least the next year to compare with unimproved tenements. This might help make the case for further funding for better demonstration projects.
- 2.18 Only 3 out of 13 **back courts** are likely to be improved with grant assistance. This has been nearly 4 years of work and is symptomatic of the difficulties in trying to encourage owners to co-operate and maintain property. To continue to be pro-active in this field will require a dedicated team and additional resources. There might have been more success had the council or other agency undertaken all the work requiring only signatures from the owners. There also might be a case for building community capacity to foster co-operation.
- 2.19 The **Clean Close Company** now employs 23 of whom 18 were unemployed, providing good training to SVQ level, and has 340 tenemental closes under contract for cleaning on a two weekly cycle. Additional cleaning services are also now available. Some potential business is lost because interested individuals are unable to persuade all owners in their tenemental close to participate. Advice leaflets on including this service as part of Housing Benefits have been issued that might help landlords decide favourably.

- 2.20 Unfortunately the **Stobswell Landlords Forum** is now virtually moribund. Active members are few and there are doubts about its ability to continue.
- 2.21 **Dundee Landlord Accreditation** now has 82 members which cover 1100 of the cities properties. This is approximately 13% of the private rented sector in Dundee. There is a landlord accreditation development officer established in the Private Sector Unit of the Housing Dept. (Report Appended) There perhaps needs to be a discussion about whether this service suffices to advocate good practice in Stobswell and that the Stobswell Landlords Forum is perhaps now not needed.
- 2.22 With regard to **shops** the Facade Enhancement Grant Programme has continued, again with the benefit of CRF assistance. Three premises have been completed on Albert St just to the south of Eliza St. There is interest being expressed for another five possible grants. There are 7 fewer vacant shops in the neighbourhood. The son of the owner of the derelict shop at 191 Princes St has made contact. In the event of him being unable to undertake his expressed ambition to renovate the exterior with a view to letting the shop he ahs been advised the Council has agreed to Compulsory Purchase.
- 2.23 **Community Safety** is satisfactory. The Anti-Social Behaviour Team, Night Time Noise Team and the Community Safety Warden Service all suffered funding fears. The Community Safety Wardens are now mainstreamed within the Leisure and Communities Dept. The external funding for antisocial behaviour services has been rolled up into the Single Outcome Agreement with a funding package for three years (2008-2011). As a result, the Antisocial Behaviour Team will continue as is except for the loss of the education and publicity officer who will be replaced by a further investigation officer. This will ensure that services on the ground are enhanced and victims of antisocial behaviour are not adversely affected. As a consequence of the rolling up of external antisocial behaviour funding into the Single Outcome Agreement, the Council have decided to continue 100% funding of Dundee Community Mediation on a two-year contract 2008-2010. All these services report Stobswell is fairly stable with incidences of nuisance below that of other areas. This is also the view of the Community Police service with regard to reported nuisance. Police records also show continuing reduction in crime statistics for the area. (Report attached)
- 2.24 The **Information and Advice Centre** is now open 4 nights a week as well as 5 days. Hillcrest Housing Assoc. is continuing funding until March 2009. The Centre is investigating charging a modest fee from services using the centre and also a job/tenants finders fee. Most of the activity involves the immigrant, mainly Polish, community. In 2004 around 400 migrant workers were assisted, in 2007 it was 5,000. The Citizens Advice Bureau now holds a surgery in the Centre every Monday for the benefit of the whole community. The Centre also still supports the youth group at the Boomerang Hall and along with the Community Police, is organising street football for children congregating around Mary Slessor Square.
- 2.25 Adjacent to the Advice and Information Centre is the **Help IT Project** that assists local businesses with developing their IT skills and needs. This project reached the end of its grant funding in December 2007 and is now operating as a social enterprise throughout Dundee, Angus and Perthshire. During the grant funded period it helped around 80 organisations and nearly 400 individuals. The project was independently evaluated and came out with flying colours, which is perhaps why its voluntary sector customers have stayed with the project. It is also developing a

significant customer base amongst small and medium sized businesses. CraigOwl offers a range of technical services and training to organisations and individuals:

- for organisations and small businesses it supplies it support, troubleshooting, installations of hardware and software and pat testing, all at very attractive rates;
- for individuals it offers pc and laptop repairs, installations and upgrades of hardware and software, home network and internet installations;
- training is an important element of it's work and it offers an open programme of courses in it and business skills, plus individual tutoring and in-house courses. Because all our centres are Learndirect Scotland approved individuals may use their ila accounts to study for such things as ECDL, Ecitizen, health and safety and many more.

2.26 The aim of Dundee **Healthy Living** Initiative is to improve health by breaking down barriers to having a healthy lifestyle (report attached). There are staff linked to the Stobswell/Hilltown area. Some new activities have been introduced in the Stobswell area over the past year:

- Gentle Walking Group in Baxter Park
- Keep Fit class in the Boomrang Project
- Smoking Cessation Group in Alliance Pharmacy

Lottery Funding has been replaced by a number of new sources including Keep Well and Fairer Scotland Fund. Keep Well means the project is working more closely with Primary Care and has links with GP Practices that have signed up to Keep Well - many of these are in the Stobswell area. A Health Coach service is offered to people in the 45 - 64 yr age band who require intensive 1 to 1 support to change their lifestyle behaviours. Many people are supported to move on to activity groups and other services.

The WEB Project at Baxter Park continues to be well used by young people. This provides a confidential service that works around issues such as sexual health, drugs and alcohol, relationships, or any other issue that is of concern Although Planning Consent has been granted for a replacement Health Centre at Wallacetown it appears a review of requirements is now underway that might modify this project. It is not known yet when this will progress.

2.27 **Youth work provision** established in the neighbourhood is continuing. The successful Thursday and Friday night football has secured funding (Community Safety Fund and CRF) to continue. A decision about future funding is still awaited. These sessions are attended by up to 100 young people and are instrumental in reducing youth related complaints in the neighbourhood. Coaching staff from Dundee FC and Dundee United FC take the sessions. The youth group for 12-14 yr olds established at Boomerang remains active and is growing in number. With Lottery and other funding now available the intention is to expand to include a separate facility for 14 -17 yr olds, possibly in other premises with a "youth cafe". Aberlour Outreach Dundee has two detached youth workers for Stobswell

2.28 In terms of **marketing**, a working group has been set up by the Stobswell Forum to engage a web designer to develop a website.

3 ACTION PROPOSED FOR 2008/2009

- 3.1 The environmental programme will include:
- Whalers Close develop car park and link to Langlands Street;
 - Prepare designs for Dundonald St for consultation.
- 3.2 At Dura Street/Erskine Street, demolish the property and sell the site to Home in Scotland for new housing.
- 3.3 At Kemback Street, secure the derelict property by CPO if necessary and seek its removal or renovation.
- 3.4 Review the tenement maintenance situation.
- 3.5 Continue to Focus budget and extra effort on the shopping street to alter perceptions.
- 3.6 Develop the website as a means of keeping the community up to date with events and actions taken and to help market the neighbourhood.

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